

Barbara and Michael Leisgen

Lichtspiel

September 9 – October 7, 2016

opening reception FRIDAY, Sept 9, 6-8pm



beta pictoris gallery is excited to announce **Barbara and Michael Leisgen - *Lichtspiel***, the German artist couple's first exhibition with the gallery.

German artist couple Barbara (born 1940) and Michael (born 1944) Leisgen's photography utilizes natural elements as mark-making devices. In their *Mimetic* works from the 1970s, a crucial moment in which the Leisgens' works were a reaction against the conceptual photography coming out of Düsseldorf, Barbara's figure becomes the writing-force within the landscape. This work is a counterforce to their ongoing *Sunwritings* series, where the camera moves opposite the sun, allowing that celestial body to burn bright lines resembling squiggles, figures, and script into the image. The homocentrism of the *Mimetic* works replaces the heliocentrism of the *Sunwritings*, adding fresh nuance to their oeuvre. Barbara stands with her arms and legs outstretched, as if offering prayers to the sky or earth. This work has a distinct place in the canon of Land Art, as well as ties to the work of Ana Mendieta. The body becomes a marker within the landscape, bisecting it, and accentuating its shapes. As the recording of a natural trace, a research concerning the body and experiments related to Land Art, Barbara Leisgen's silhouette is set, and leaves its fleeting trace in landscapes; the actions involve stretching out her arms to follow the contours of undulating countryside (the *Paysage mimétique* and *Mimesis* series), or to include the sun in an arc drawn by her arm while she is seen from behind in the center of the image. This is not merely imitating nature through its gestures; it describes, in the sense of tracing, and channels it as well. The (re)appropriation of the landscape is subjective, the silhouette of Barbara Leisgen being displayed in the landscape, inscribing its mark therein is ephemeral.



The pictures recall the visions of German Romanticism, notably the pictures of Caspar David Friedrich - his 1818 painting *Morgenlicht* (shown on left) being the figurative model for the Leisgen's *Mimesis* works, although Friedrich's paradigm for considering nature as sacred is amended. One might see this as an anthropocentric romantic perspective such as the French Romantic view gave us. And yet, despite the sublime aspect of the photographed scenes and the preciousness of the prints which, beyond black and white, allow us to imagine a range of colors in the dazzling light, their images also refer back to the naivety and intrinsic nostalgia of souvenir photographs. The actual viewer is placed in a specular perception, being led to look at a woman posing in a natural expanse. By doing so, Barbara and Michael Leisgen are the precursors of current landscape approaches, relying simultaneously on a modernist and postmodernist viewpoint.

Lichtspiel opens at **beta pictoris gallery** on September 9, 2016 and runs through October 7, 2016. The opening reception will be hosted at **beta pictoris gallery** from 6:00-8:00 pm on September 9, with Barbara and Michael Leisgen in attendance. The artists are available for interviews; please contact the gallery to schedule. High res images of the exhibition are available through **beta pictoris gallery**.

Barbara and Michael Leisgen's work has been included nationally and internationally in important exhibitions such as the **9th Biennale de Paris** (1975); **documenta 6** (1977); the 1985 exhibition "*Lisible/Ilisible*" at the **Centre Georges Pompidou** in Paris; and their 1987 and 2000 solo exhibitions at the **Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst** in Aachen, Germany. Their work is discussed in numerous publications, including "*Feminism Art Theory: An Anthology 1968 - 2014*" (2015) by Hilary Robinson, "*Video Art Historicized: Traditions and Negotiations (Studies in Art Historiography)*" by Malin Hedlin Hayden (2015), "*Une introduction a l'art contemporain*" by Philippe Coubetergues (2005), "*Le Corps photographié*" by Jean-Paul Blanchet, Dimitri Konstantinidis, ... (1996), "*Le sentiment de paysage à la fin du XXème siècle*" by Bernard Ceysson (1977), "*Chroniques de l'Art Vivant*" (1974), amidst others. Their work been the subject of several publications - mostly in conjunction with exhibitions, such as "Les Ecritures du Soleil (Sonnenschriften)" (1978), "Die Ägyptische Wand" (1980), "Stellungsspiel" (1987), "De la beauté usée : Barbara et Michael Leisgen, [exposition, Paris, Maison européenne de la photographie, 10 septembre-9 novembre 1997]" (1997), "Kunst-Landschaft 1969-2000" (2000), "Zeitsprung" (2000), and "Positions" (2006).

Maus Contemporary / beta pictoris gallery is a contemporary art gallery and space dedicated to supporting creativity with a focus on experimental and issue driven works. Through representing emerging, established, and internationally recognized artists, the gallery is committed to bringing a global perspective to contemporary issues and practices across the visual arts. The program consists of exhibitions, print publications, and media outreach.

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